

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony

November 21, 2022

The President. Hello, Brookland Middle School!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. Well, good morning, everyone. I'm sorry, there's a tradition around where I come from in the State of Delaware. When there's a Governor in the room, you've got to stand up. And I—your Governor is here, and I wanted to say hi to him. So thank you, Governor, for being here.

It's a wonderful Thanksgiving tradition here at the White House. There's a lot to say about it, but it's chilly outside, so I'm going to keep this short. Nobody likes it when your—their turkey gets cold. *[Laughter]* I don't know if they're mad yet or not.

But at any rate, I want to thank Ronnie Parker, chairman of the National Turkey Federation, and his family from Monroe, North Carolina. Ronnie has got 44 years in the turkey business, and he also is the grower of our honored guests today.

And Lexie—he got a lot of help from Lexie, a fourth-generation member of the ranch where the turkeys were raised and prepared for this very day. They don't know what the—they're not sure of the verdict yet, but we're going to find out in a minute.

They listened to a lot of music, I'm told, in order to prepare for the crowd noise today. That's pretty—that's real hard work. And they interacted with the children to show their softer side. Sounds like another flock hoping to come to Washington in 2024. *[Laughter]*

But look, we're joined by another special guest, and that is—for what is the largest National Turkey Presentation ever held at the White House. My dear friends, I'm going to introduce them again, Roy Cooper and First Lady Kristin Cooper are here. Truly fantastic leaders. Say hi.

We're also joined by Congressman Dan Bishop. Where are you, Danny? There—Dan, welcome. Great to see you here. Thank you. And—from the 9th District of North Carolina.

And a special thanks to members of my staff for their—and their young children who are here today as well. As a matter of fact, if you look—you see that dog up in the balcony there?

Audience member. Yes.

The President. That German Shepherd. That's my dog, Commander. I was worried if he came down here with all of you, he'd just do nothing, but kiss you and lick you. But he may go after the turkeys, so I kept him up there. *[Laughter]*

But we're joined by another group of kids—as I said, the—from—students from Brookland Middle School. The reason—they're here in Washington. The reason they're joining us today is, you know, they were invited a couple years ago to come and—but because of COVID, we couldn't have it. So I'm glad you guys came this year. Thank you very, very much for coming.

And we're also joined by students from the 4-H programs of Virginia and Maryland and the folks from the National Future Farmers of America. And I want to thank them for being here as well.

But before I gobble up too much time——

[At this point, the President's dog Commander barked, and the turkeys gobbled.]

[*Laughter*] I didn't mean you get started, man. Don't start on them. [*Laughter*]

And by the way, that's my grandson Beau up there and my granddaughter. Don't let him jump. [*Laughter*]

At any rate, you know, let—we've got to get on with this. First of all, the votes are in. They've been counted and verified. There's no ballot stuffing. There's no fowl play. [*Laughter*] The only red wave this season is going to be a German Shepherd, Commander, knocks over the cranberry sauce on our table. That will cause—they are big turkeys, aren't they?

My fellow Americans, please welcome the 2022 National Thanksgiving Turkeys, Chocolate and Chip. That's—I tell you what, man. They can go wherever they want. [*Laughter*]

Of course, Chocolate is my favorite—Chocolate is my favorite ice cream, so I—but I could have—we could have named them CHIPS and Science, but anyway. [*Laughter*] It would have been good names as well.

But Chocolate chip weighs 46 pounds. And I'm told he loves catching sun on the Outer Banks. And Chip weighs 47, and he loves barbeque and basketball, I'm told. [*Laughter*]

After receiving their Presidential pardons today, Chocolate and Chip are going to head to the Nation's great basketball schools and research universities, North Carolina State.

Now, when we told them they were joining the Wolfpack, they got a little scared. [*Laughter*] But then we explained it was just a mascot for the school. It has one of the Nation's best poultry science departments in the country.

And now, based on their temperament and commitment to being productive members of society, I hereby pardon—I hereby pardon——

[*A turkey gobbled.*]

Yes. [*Laughter*] I hereby pardon Chocolate and Chip.

Which one is Chocolate? And who's Chip? [*Laughter*]

Circle S Ranch employee Alexa Starnes. This is Chocolate.

The President. This is Chocolate, you're pardoned. And so are you, Chip.

Chip says: "I know. I don't even have to be told."

White House aide. Ronnie, why don't we put them on the table?

The President. Can we do that? If you can do that—Ronnie, that's a big bird, man. [*Laughter*]

We have more chickens than anybody in the Nation in Delaware, but we don't have turkeys.

Look at this. God love you. Now, this is Chocolate, right?

National Turkey Federation Chairman Ronnie Parker. It is.

Ms. Starnes. This is Chocolate.

The President. Chocolate, you are pardoned. You are pardoned. He said, "You had to tell me that?" Yes. Yes, you are. Yes. I'm serious.

He said: "I don't know, man. You didn't have to pardon me. I knew I was pardoned." [*Laughter*]

At any rate, thank you both very, very much.

Mr. Parker. Thank you.

The President. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

Mr. Parker. Appreciate you.

The President. How many turkeys have you got down there—are you raising?

Mr. Parker. Circle S Ranch grows about 9½ million turkeys a year.

The President. God love you. Nine and a half million turkeys. I tell you what. That's like some of the countries I've been to. *[Laughter]* And the—anyway.

[The President addressed Chocolate.]

Do you want to talk? *[Laughter]*

No, he doesn't. Look, folks, in all seriousness, let me close with this.

We can't forget the reason for Thanksgiving in the first place. The pilgrims thought it was pretty important in tough times to come together and thank God, to be grateful for what we have. That's what the Thanksgiving tradition is all about: being grateful for what we have and grateful for fellow Americans who we may never meet, but who we——

[The turkeys gobbled.]

There you go. *[Laughter]* They're grateful.

And think about the scientists and researchers, doctors and nurses keeping us safe through the pandemic. Two years ago, we couldn't even safely have Thanksgiving with the large family gatherings. Now we can. That's progress, and let's keep it going.

We have new COVID vaccine updates to deal with new variants to protect you and your loved ones. So get it today. Get your flu shots as well. This winter can be a—much happier than recent holiday seasons, but you have to do your part. Please visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov). Decide what you're going to do.

We're also are grateful for frontline workers that are keeping essential services going and growing and providing food on our tables. We're grateful for our faith leaders and their counsel and comfort and support.

Later today Jill and I are going to be flying down to North Carolina—to Cherry Point, North Carolina—for a "friendsgiving," where we'll be serving Thanksgiving dinner to troops and military families to demonstrate our gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

And so many of those families are missing someone at their table today, like our family. So many military folks that we have lost. And the—so there's just really—it's important to keep them in our hearts, those who have lost so much and those who are going to have an empty seat at their table this Thanksgiving.

This is a special time and the—in the greatest nation on Earth, so let's be grateful. Scripture says, "Let us rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances."

Folks, let's remember—all the political fighting that goes on that you read about—let's remember one thing: This is the United States of America—the United States of America. There's not a single, solitary thing beyond our capacity as a nation—nothing beyond our capacity—if we do it together, united. United.

[The turkeys gobbled.]

[Laughter] You picked two great turkeys.

From the Biden family to all of yours, happy Thanksgiving. And may God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you all for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to his granddaughter Naomi K. Biden.

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